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Intelligence Community Brief

Haiti: A Point/Counterpoint Debate

Key Points

Intelligence Community analysts convened in December to debate two questions regarding developments in Haiti over the next six months:

- Will legislative and local elections be held as scheduled on 19 March 2000?
- How politicized will the Haitian National Police (HNP) become?

Community analysts judge there is a 2-in-3 chance that legislative and local elections will be delayed by more than a month and that the elections will be combined with the presidential balloting and held in the summer or fall of 2000. Former President Aristide, while the odds-on favorite to win the presidential race, is likely to become increasingly concerned about his party's ability to score a solid first-round victory. By holding combined elections, Aristide probably believes his coattails will help Fanmi Lavalas (FL) Party candidates sweep their legislative and local races.

The National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Latin America, on the other hand, believes the odds for holding elections more or less on time are at least 50-50 because several recent deadlines have been met and momentum for elections is building both domestically and internationally.

Community analysts and the NIO judge that pressures to politicize the HNP will mount. Aristide and his coterie probably will seek more control over the HNP to ensure a more favorable election outcome and might feel increasingly threatened by HNP-supported counterdrug policies. Thus, we place the odds at 2 in 3 that over the next six months the HNP will act in ways that are detrimental to key US policy objectives.

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Introduction ☐

In December 1999, Intelligence Community analysts covering Haiti engaged in a point/counterpoint debate focusing on two questions:

- Will legislative and local elections be held as scheduled on 19 March 2000?
- How politicized will the Haiti National Police force (HNP) become? ☐

Analysts were asked to assemble the best data and develop the most persuasive arguments that would support two contrasting hypotheses for each question. For the election question, the hypotheses were: 1) the elections would be held as scheduled on 19 March or delayed no more than a month at most, or 2) the election date would continue to slip, resulting in combined legislative and presidential elections in the summer or fall of 2000. For the politicization question, the hypotheses were: 1) Aristide and his security advisers would gain complete de facto—if not formal—control of the police force by the time elections were held, allowing them to manipulate the HNP for political gain, or 2) HNP Chief Denize would continue to operate the HNP in a professional manner, and Aristide would not compel any wholesale purge or restructuring of the force. ☐

In the discussion that follows, we lay out the evidence and logic that supports each hypothesis, list several indicators we would expect to see in the coming months if that hypothesis were valid, identify key variables, and provide some bottom-line judgments of how we expect these issues to play out over the next six months. ☐

Election Timetable ☐

1. The Case for Elections Being Held on Time.

On 30 September 1999, President Preval signed a decree formally convoking legislative and local elections on 19 March 2000 and a second round on 30 April. A formal electoral calendar was published initiating a civic education campaign in October 1999, candidate registration on 15 November, and voter registration on 10 January. Despite some significant logistic problems, the election appears to be proceeding largely on schedule. The civic education campaign was launched on 24 October. The period for candidate registration—which was to close on 10 December—was extended for only 48 hours, forcing all the parties to scramble to register their candidates. Few candidates were challenged, and there was a relative absence of violence. Former President Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas (FL) Party held its national convention on 15 and 16 December, and Aristide publicly called on the opposition to support honest elections and appealed to the private sector for partnership. ☐

Meanwhile, the steady drumbeat of support for the electoral process emanating from high-level foreign visitors and international observers is building momentum to keep the election schedule on track. Various logistic problems could create obstacles and some inequities in the process, but few are "show-stoppers." Most can be overcome through increased international engagement or by providing "waivers" for when certain requirements—such as financial disclosure reports—must be met. ☐

The opposition parties are raising funds and gearing up for the campaign season. They are learning how to provide their own security

**Indicators Hypothesis One
Is Emerging** []

- *Preval and Aristide remain publicly committed to holding elections on time.*
- *Aristide increases his public role as FL stalwarts mobilize early in the campaign.*
- *The candidate list is finalized by 16 January, and ballots are printed in January.*
- *Voter registration proceeds on track with a strong turnout.*
- *Opposition rallies are held and not violently disrupted; popular organizations maintain a low profile.*
- *Opposition parties remain in the race.*
- *Competing parties sign the nonviolence pact.* []

needs and how to engage the HNP earlier and more effectively in their preparations for political events. Recent rallies have been well attended and marked by fewer disruptions, with the HNP conducting itself well in separating political agitators from the crowd. []

Aristide and his coterie recognize (and have been warned) that any attempt to derail the schedule would be counterproductive to their long-term interests because it would undermine the credibility of the elections in the eyes of the international community and diminish the prospects of gaining substantial international assistance, once Aristide is re-elected. Aristide probably also calculates that an active opposition works to his advantage in that it deflects charges that he is intent on gaining an overriding majority in the Parliament and establishing de facto one-man rule as president. []

2. The Case for the Elections Being Delayed.

[] Aristide will pull out all the stops to ensure that legislative and local elections are delayed and combined with the presidential vote, which is scheduled for November 2000. []

[] Aristide prefers combined elections in about August and before US presidential elections. []

[] Aristide believes his coattails will help FL candidates sweep the legislative and local races. []

Toward this end, Aristide is likely to take several steps to strengthen his position and manipulate the election infrastructure to ensure a strong FL showing at the ballot box. []

[] Reflecting his strong ties to Aristide, Preval announced in November his support for the FL and called on citizens to vote for Aristide's party. Aristide also relies on Preval to dampen international expectations that elections can be held on schedule. In addition, Aristide will call on party loyalists in charge of key ministries and cash-cow enterprises—such as the port and the telephone company—to stock FL campaign coffers. The FL also is likely to turn increasingly to popular organizations and gangs to disrupt the electoral process, intimidate the opposition, and plan pro-FL demonstrations. []

Aristide has refused to speak out against violence and FL-inspired intimidation of opposition politicians. []

[] In November, popular organizations with strong ties to the FL disrupted opposition rallies in Petit Goave and in Port-au-Prince, and they are likely to continue such activities. Opposition leaders strongly believe that a group closely allied with the FL was responsible for fires that resulted in burning the homes

Indicators Hypothesis Two Is Emerging ☐

- *Preval states that holding free and fair elections is more important than holding elections on time.*
- *Significant delays occur in voter registration.*
- *FL fails to mobilize early in the campaign.*
- *A scandal erupts involving members of the CEP, forcing some to resign.*
- *Polling stations remain understaffed and inadequately funded.*
- *The level of campaign violence increases; an opposition politician is assassinated.* ☐

of two opposition leaders in December. Aristide also is likely to resort to threats to dissuade business leaders from funding opposition candidates or parties, according to sensitive reporting. ☐

Meanwhile, the FL is attempting to discredit the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) in hopes of stalling the electoral process. Several FL loyalists have publicly decried the CEP's incompetence, and defense attache reporting indicates FL popular organizations disrupted the CEP's civic education campaign kickoff in October. In addition, ☐ the CEP has come under pressure from FL officials and Preval to delay the election. There have been several instances of intimidation, including the hijacking of a member's car and shots fired outside another member's home. Local election officials also have been targeted for intimidation. ☐

Key Variables and Bottom Lines. Analysts concluded that whether elections will be held more or less on time—that is, within a month of 19 March—will be determined largely by how confident Aristide and his coterie are that they will score a solid first-round victory. If the opposition fails to develop a strong challenge and the level of political violence remains low, Aristide probably would opt to hold at least the first round of elections as scheduled. This would underscore the credibility of the process and increase the prospects of gaining substantial international assistance once Aristide is re-elected. On balance, however, analysts believe that as the legislative election date approaches, Aristide's level of confidence in his party's chance of success is likely to slip. Thus, analysts judge there is a 2-in 3-chance elections will be delayed by more than a month and that the second round of elections will be combined with the presidential elections and held in the summer or fall of 2000.¹ Aristide probably calculates correctly that combining the elections would give FL party candidates a boost. Logistic considerations probably will be cited—with some justification—as the reason for combining the elections. ☐

Politicization of the HNP ☐

1. The Case for a Politicized Police Force.

Secretary of State for Security Manuel was forced out of office in October when he refused to cooperate with FL demands for using the HNP as a political tool for Aristide and to show leniency toward drug traffickers and corrupt police officials. Although HNP Chief Denize had been subject to the same pressures and

¹ The NIO for Latin America believes the odds for holding elections more or less on time are better, at least 50-50, because several recent deadlines have been met, and momentum for elections is building both domestically and internationally.

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criticisms, he was allowed to remain in his post because he worked out an accommodation with Aristide and his security advisers. []

[] Denize is now a frequent visitor to Aristide's home in Tabarre, suggesting that he has developed a temporary modus vivendi with the FL. []

Meanwhile, opposition leaders have openly expressed concern that the voter registration process and the security of election materials and ballots will be compromised. They see the HNP as a force that is politicized, corrupt, and unable to provide nationwide election security.

[] Aristide's loyalists have made serious inroads into the HNP's senior ranks. In December, specialized police units provided security for FL candidates when they registered but not for opposition candidates. Any future effort by Denize to oppose the FL on a key issue almost certainly would spur his forced departure. []

2. The Case for Minimizing Politicization.

Manuel's forced resignation was motivated largely by FL perceptions that he had become an increasingly political actor who would not support the FL's agenda. Despite rumors of his imminent departure, Denize has remained in his post and appears to be holding his own within security and political circles. In December, Prime Minister Alexis publicly confirmed the government's trust in Denize and the HNP.

[] Denize will remain in his post as long as he is not forced to make major personnel shifts or take other actions that would blatantly favor the FL.

- In December, Preval refused Aristide security adviser Dany Toussaint's demand that he sack both Denize and HNP Inspector General Eucher Joseph, []

Indicators Hypothesis One Is Emerging []

- *A major shakeup occurs in senior police ranks, resulting in the appointment of more officers with strong loyalties to Aristide and the FL.*
- *The HNP's specialized units are no longer dispatched to provide security at opposition rallies.*
- *The HNP is absent at opposition rallies, which are frequently disrupted by agitators.*
- *The popular campaign against HNP Chief Denize, Counterdrug Chief Marion Andresol, and HNP Inspector General Eucher Joseph resurfaces.*
- *Denize or other senior police officials resign or are forcefully removed, citing major policy differences with Preval.*
- *Despite its rhetoric, the HNP takes little action in support of counterdrug initiatives.* []

- Another positive sign is that Guy Phillipe—a former Delmas police commissaire who reportedly has close ties to the FL and drug traffickers—was reassigned in October but did not accept another position in the HNP.
- Denize also has shown a willingness to move against drug traffickers; several arrests and seizures have been made since Manuel's departure. []

In recent months, the HNP and its specialized units provided adequate security for two Espace political rallies and responded positively to their request for a police escort on 9 December. Efforts also have been made to coordinate their activities with private security guards hired by the opposition candidates. The HNP's crowd control unit (CIMO) recently provided security to a local election office and effectively broke up FL-on-FL violence at a town in northern Haiti. In addition, police officials have been meeting with CEP leaders to discuss security procedures for the forthcoming balloting. ☐

Key Variables and Bottom Lines. Analysts have identified two variables that most likely will determine whether the HNP becomes politicized: 1) the degree to which Aristide and his coterie feel they must be in control of the election process, and 2) the extent to which they might feel threatened by HNP-supported anti-drug initiatives. ☐

Pressures to politicize the HNP are likely to mount in the coming months, particularly if the Espace continues to attract large numbers of supporters to its political rallies and can ensure their security through the use of large numbers of private security guards. Other factors that would increase the level of insecurity in FL ranks would be their inability to attract supporters to their rallies, indications of significant business funding of opposition parties, and polling results showing declining support for FL candidates. ☐

Given these likely trends, analysts and the NIO judge that Aristide and his coterie probably will seek more control over the HNP over the next six months and might feel increasingly threatened by HNP-supported counterdrug policies. Thus, we place the odds at 2 in 3 that the

Indicators Hypothesis Two Is Emerging ☐

- *Senior officers who are generally considered apolitical and effective such as Denize, HNP Inspector General Eucher Joseph, counterdrug chief Mario Andresol, Coast Guard head Leon Charles, and SWAT Chief Etienne Saint-Gourdin, remain in their posts through the elections.*
- *Preval rebuffs future entreaties by Dany Toussaint to dismiss senior officers or reverse HNP policy decisions.*
- *The HNP develops and implements a credible strategic plan to provide security for the elections.*
- *The HNP provides adequate security for both FL and opposition party rallies.*
- *The Inspector General continues to dismiss police officers for improper activities—including human rights abuses, drug trafficking, and corruption—at current rates.*
- *The selection of new officers remains based on applicants' qualifications and not political ties.*
- *The HNP demonstrates full cooperation with US counterdrug initiatives. ~~(CNE)~~*

HNP will become more politicized and act in ways that are detrimental to key US policy objectives. ☐